

**MANSFIELD DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP
PLANNING AND DESIGN COMMITTEE
Mansfield Downtown Partnership Office
1244 Storrs Road**

Tuesday, August 17, 2010

MINUTES

Members: Steve Bacon, Laurie Best, Chris Kueffner, Peter Millman, Ruth Moynihan, Betsy Paterson, Karin Randolph, and Pene Williams

Staff: Cynthia van Zelm

Guests: Gloria Bent and Jessica Higham (Mansfield Advocates for Children); Kevin Grunwald (Mansfield Director of Human Services)

1. Call to Order

Steve Bacon called the meeting to order at 5:08 pm. Attendees introduced themselves.

2. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes from June 15, 2010

Chris Kueffner made a motion to approve the June 15, 2010 minutes. Betsy Paterson seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Update and Presentation from Mansfield Advocates for Children

Kevin Grunwald said that the Mansfield Advocates for Children (MAC) is an advisory committee appointed by the Mansfield Town Council.

Mr. Bacon recapped the involved with MAC and the Planning and Design Committee, noting that Ms. Bent and Ms. Higham had been to previous meetings. He said that over the course of the last few months, MAC had developed a proposal of children's' programming and children-friendly play structures that may be part of the public space at Storrs Center.

Ms. Bent referred to a Power Point presentation and noted that the reason they are interested in a play area as a gathering space is because one of MAC's primary interests is to focus on community connectedness.

Ms. Bent reviewed the types of playscapes that other communities have as well as additional infrastructure that would be appealing to families including public restrooms, shade trees, walking routes, a family resource center, etc.

Ms. Bent said her opinion is that play structures could be scattered throughout the development; one central location is not absolutely necessary.

She noted that the trend is to create more of a nature play area vs. wooden and metal playscapes from the past.

With respect to funding any play structures, Ms. Bent said that MAC could do some fundraising and they know of people that may be able to help with design.

Ms. Bent explained that family resource centers are often in school buildings. Many programs could be run out of a family resource center. Would it fit as part of the intermodal center?

With respect to programming, Ms. Bent suggested that MAC coordinate with the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts on programming events in Storrs Center. Ms. Paterson thought this was a great idea.

Ms. Bent suggested that next steps might be to develop an ad hoc committee to review playscape location and programming options. Children need to be part of this ad hoc committee.

Mr. Bacon said the idea of a walking trail makes sense with the proximity to Whetten Woods. This could be a learning experience for children if walks are led by a naturalist.

Peter Millman asked where an appropriate place might be for a fenced in playground? Does it make sense to have it towards the woods where it is protected from traffic? Ms. Bent referred to links to websites on the Power Point that have information on playground safety.

Ms. Higham said her idea is to have a place where children can play while, for example, adults listen to a concert. Her thought is that it may be important to have a playground where the activity is taking place.

Ms. Higham noted that it may be premature to apply for grants for funding if the town square area will not be completed for awhile. Funding agencies want to see that money is spent in a certain time period.

The Committee discussed obtaining information from MAC about the size of a space they are interested in and relay that to the master developer LeylandAlliance.

Ms. Bent suggested forming a subcommittee to look at the issues of space and needs.

Ms. Higham noted that the space for a play area could be any size and that it would be important that it be located near restrooms and parking.

Mr. Grunwald said he felt it was important not to lose sight of a central gathering space.

Ms. Higham said the feedback from parents is that space need to be accessible for handicapped children. The age period to target is from toddlers to 8 to 10 years old. She said MAC generally focuses on children up to 8 years old.

Mr. Bacon thought a subcommittee of MAC may be the most appropriate way to proceed since the Planning and Design Committee will be busy reviewing site plans and may not be able to give the children's space and programming the attention it needs. The Committee should be involved but may not be able to take the lead.

Mayor Paterson said she would work with Mr. Grunwald and Town Manager Matt Hart to put together a subcommittee. Ms. van Zelm would stay involved as Executive Director of the Partnership. Members from the Planning and Design Committee will be solicited to see if they are interested in serving on this subcommittee.

Ms. Bent and Ms. Higham agreed that a family resource center would not fit in the Storrs Center area.

The representatives from MAC and the Committee tentatively agreed to hold a similar presentation as today in front of the Partnership Board of Directors on October 7.

5. Update on Storrs Center (Storrs Road, Parking Garage and Intermodal Center)

Ms. van Zelm said a meeting will be held at the CT Department of Transportation with Town, Partnership and BL Companies staff on August 27 to review comments on Storrs Road.

Ms. van Zelm said there are seven firms that have been shortlisted to receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) on the parking garage, and three firms that will receive an RFP for the intermodal center and the Village Street.

6. Topics for Next Meeting and Set Meeting Date

The Committee will meet next on October 19.

7. Adjourn

Ms. Paterson made a motion to adjourn. Karin Randolph seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously. The Committee adjourned at 6:40 pm.